

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 5, 6, 8-10, 12-18, 20, 44, 64, 67, 70, 71, 74-78, 81, 82, 85, 86, 89, 90, 94, 100 and 105-122 were pending at the time of the mailing of the outstanding Office Action. By this amendment, no claims have been cancelled. Claims 1, 105, 114, 121 and 122 have been amended. No new claims have been added.

The disclosure was objected to because of informalities present in claims 105 and 114. These claims have been amended as suggested by the Examiner to eliminate the noted informalities. Withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 114-122 stand rejected as being indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. The Examiner maintains that it is unclear if "the longitudinal direction" recited in claim 114, line 17 refers to the first or second (or some other) longitudinal direction. Claims 121 and 122 were held to be indefinite for the same reasons. Claim 114 has been amended to recite that the direction in question is the first longitudinal direction. Claims 121 and 122 have been amended to recite that the line referenced in these claims is a line parallel to the longitudinal axis. Such a line is illustrated in Fig. 1, reference numeral 6. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 5, 6, 8-10, 12-18, 20, 44, 64, 67, 70, 71, 74-77, 81, 82, 85, 86, 89, 90, 94, 100 and 105-122 stand rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,190,406 to Duerig et al. ("Duerig") in view of U.S. Pat. App. No 2002/0007212 to Brown et al. ("Brown").

A personal interview was held on 2 May 2005. The undersigned attorney wishes to thank Examiner Thaler for the courtesies extended in the course of that interview. During the interview, claim 1, particularly the recitation of claim 1 that adjacent bar elements form the limbs of a V-shape, was discussed in light of Duerig and Brown. The Examiner maintained that Fig. 9 of Brown provides bar elements that form a V-shape. The undersigned attorney pointed out that the limbs of a V-shape diverge from each other

from a common point while Brown provides limbs that converge at certain points. Agreement was not reached on this point. A potential amendment whereby the limitation, "provided that adjacent bar elements that share a common turning point do not converge at any point as the adjacent bar elements extend away from the common turning point" would be added was also discussed. The Examiner agreed that Brown does not show this feature but that additional consideration of other references might be necessary if such an amendment were offered.

Claims 1 and 114 have been amended to recite that adjacent bar elements that share a common turning point do not converge as they extend away from the common turning point as previously discussed with the Examiner as detailed above. Support for this amendment may be found in Figs. 1, 4 and 5. It is maintained that the cited prior art does not teach or suggest such a feature, and that therefore, claims 1 and 114 patentably distinguish over the prior art. Likewise, claims 5, 6, 8-10, 12-18, 20, 44, 64, 67, 70, 71, 74-78, 81, 82, 85, 86, 89, 90, 94, 100 and 105-113 and claims 115-122, which depend from, and contain all the limitations of claims 1 and 114, respectively, also patentably distinguish over the prior art. Withdrawal of the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections based on the claim amendments made above and the issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

The outstanding Office action was mailed on 29 March 2005. The Examiner set a shortened statutory period for reply of 3 months from the mailing date. Therefore, this response is timely if filed on or before 29 June 2005. No petition for an extension of time or accompanying fee is believed to be due in making this response. In this response, no claims have been cancelled or added. Therefore, no fees for additional claims are believed to be due. However, in the event that a fee for the filing of his response is insufficient, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee deficiency or to credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 15-0450.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Cunniff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "J".

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